Psychology

The term ‘Psychology’ is derived from two Greek words; Psyche means “soul or breath” and Logos means “knowledge or study” (study or investigation of something).

According to Bagga & Singh (1990), the term Psychology was first used by Rudolf Goeckle, in 1950. They have chronologically given the definitions of psychology.

Psychology as the Science of Soul:

This definition, given by Aristotle, is based on the literal translation of the word psychology. The Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato gave a very important place to soul in human life. They felt that life has no meaning without the soul. philosophers studied all aspects of knowledge. Thus, psychology was regarded as only a branch of philosophy.

This definition was rejected as the concept of soul is very vague. The philosophers could not clarify the origin, nature, or the place of soul nor could they explain the relationship between the soul and the body. The concept of soul brings in the concept of God, which is as mysterious as the soul. It has religious implications that are against the spirit of science and can retard the development of psychology as a science. Soul is a metaphysical concept beyond experience and knowledge. It cannot be observed, measured, analyzed, or experimented upon.

Psychology is the science of mind:

This definition was emphasized by the structural school of psychology who established psychology as a science distinct from Philosophy. Wilhelm Wundt, the father of Experimental Psychology, first established a psychological laboratory in Leipzig, near Vienna, in 1879. His student. Titchener. have a systematic account of Psychology in his influential book Experimental Psychology, wherein he defined Psychology as the sense of mind.

This definition was also eventually rejecters for the following reasons: The concept of mind is very vague and ambiguous. Mind may be conceptualized as the whole nervous system, just the brain, a mental process, the sum total of experience, conscious or unconscious, as a part of personality, or personality itself. We do not know how it relates to the body, Mind is a metaphysical concept that cannot be observed, measured, analyzed, or experimented upon. It cannot be verified.

Psychology is the science of consciousness:

William James the philosopher, who was the harbinger of functionalism, defined psychology as the science of consciousness. This definition is based on the fact that we are always aware of mental and motor behavior, and whatever exists outside our consciousness does not exist for the individual.

However, this definition was rejected because: There is little agreement on the meaning of consciousness. Moreover, it is difficult to measure consciousness in quantitative ems. A concept that cannot even be measured and cannot be experimented upon and hence is unscientific.

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Consciousness, like mind, is a subjective concept and hence can be studied Through introspection only. It is not open to experimental investigations.

Psychology as the Science of Behavior:

The latest and the modern concepts of psychology are in terms of behaviour. The term behaviour was popularised by J.B Watson (1878- 1958). According to him psychology is the positive science of behaviour. According to Charles E. Skinner (1938), "Psychology deals with responses to any and every kind of situation that life presents. By responses or behaviour is meant all forms of processes, adjustment, activities and experiences of the organism."

Thus, Psychology was a study of soul or mind but its focus has been shifted from study of soul and has established itself as a discipline which deals with process underlying human experiences and behaviour.

Definitions:

Psychology is all about human behaviour, about mental processes, and about the context in which behaviour and mental processes occur. (Das, 1998)

A science in which behavioral and other evidence is used to understand the internal processes leading people (and members of other species) to behave as they do. (Eysenck, 2004)

Psychology is the science of human and animal behaviour. It includes the application of this science to human problems. (Morgan et al., 1986)

The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. (Feldman,1996)

The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism's physical state, mental state and external environment (Tavris and Wade, 1997).

" Psychology is the positive science of behaviour"- J.B. Watson

"Psychology is the science of behaviour and experience".- Burrhus Frederic Skinner (March 20, 1904 – August 18, 1990)

"Psychology today concerns itself with the scientific investigation of behaviour"- N.L. Munn

"Psychology is the science that studies behaviour and mental process".- Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson(1975)

"Psychology is the science of the facts or phenomena or self"- Deway, John VIII. "Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour of living creatures in their contact with outer world"- Koffka, Kurt

" Psychology is the positive science which studies the behaviour of men and animals, so far as that behaviour is regarded as an expression of that inner life of thought and feeling which we call mental life".- James Drever

" Psychology is the science which aims to give us better understanding and control of the behaviour of the organism as a whole"- McDougall, William

Origin of Psychology:

Two ways to view the historical development of scientific psychology are the personalistic approach and the naturalistic approach:

The personalistic theory of scientific history focuses on the achievements and contributions of specific individuals. According to this viewpoint, progress and change are attributable directly to the will and charisma of unique persons who alone redirected the course of history.

Often, the contributions of scientists, artists, and scholars were ignored or suppressed during their lifetimes, only to be recognized long afterward. These instances imply that the intellectual, cultural, or spiritual climate of the times can determine whether an idea will be accepted or rejected, praised or scorned. The history of science is also the story of discoveries and insights that were initially rejected. Even the greatest thinkers and inventors have been constrained by the Zeitgeist, by the spirit or climate of the times. Thus, the acceptance and application of a great person's discovery or idea may be limited by prevailing thought, but an idea too unorthodox for one time and place may be readily received and supported by a generation or a century later. Slow change is often the rule for scientific progress.

The **naturalistic theory** of history proposes that the times make the person, or at least make possible the recognition and acceptance of what that person has to say. Unless the Zeitgeist and other contextual forces are receptive to the new work, its proponent may not be heard, or they may be shunned or put to death. Society's response, too, depends on the Zeitgeist.

Psychology gradually emerged over the course of the nineteenth century. It may be recalled that modern Western science is often thought to have its origins in the sixteenth century renaissance. The seeds of scientific thought, however, are traceable to Hellenic, Chinese, Indian, and Arabic civilizations.

1. **Ancient Greeks' views:** Aristotle led the empiricistic view which was opposed by rationalistic view led by Plato. Aristotle promoted the idea of elementalism meaning analyzing anything complex by reducing its elements.
2. **René Descartes,** a French philosopher (1596–1650), suggested that mind and body are distinct entities and that they interact through the pineal gland, found deep within the brain; this view is known as dualism. Other philosophers, in contrast, suggested that mind can influence body and body can influence mind—a view known as interactionism.
3. **Biological Roots & Experimental Psychology:** During the period from 1860 to 1880, **Johannes Müller** described how electrical signals were conducted by nerves within the body; **Hermann von Helmholtz** showed how receptors in the eyes and ears receive and interpret sensations from the outside world; and **Gustav Fechner** demonstrated that our perceptions of physical stimuli—for instance, the loudness of a sound or brightness of a light—are related in lawful, predictable ways to the physical energies of these stimuli.

The evolutionary works of Charles Darwin also brought significant changes in the field of physiology.

4. By 1879, in fact, Wilhelm Wundt had founded the **first formal laboratory** for research in psychology at the University of Leipzig. Because of this and other contributions, Wundt is often described as the "founder of experimental psychology." Interestingly, he also contributed to the field of folk (cultural) psychology also but under the prevailing ethos that work remained neglected for a long time. (Actually, though, Alexander Bain, a philosopher, founded the influential journal Mind in 1876, wrote several books about psychology, and trained a large number of graduate students who went on to do significant work in psychology. So, in a sense, he, too, is a candidate for this title—although perhaps less directly than Wundt.)
5. One of Wundt's students, G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924), was influential in bringing psychology to the United States. He founded the first laboratory of psychology at Johns Hopkins in 1883, helped start the American Psychological Association in 1892, and then became its first president. Psychology was a big hit in the United States—perhaps because universities there were relatively young and so were more receptive to change than older universities elsewhere. By 1893, twenty-four U.S. universities had established psychology laboratories. All was not smooth sailing for the new field, however. In fact, it was soon rocked to its foundations by heated controversies concerning its focus—what, exactly, it should study. The emergence of modern psychology was greatly facilitated by the ideas of evolutionism and individualism.
6. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the methods of the natural sciences were being used to investigate purely mental phenomena. Techniques had been developed, apparatus devised, important books written, and widespread interest aroused. British empirical philosophers and astronomers emphasized the importance of the senses, and German scientists were describing how the senses functioned. The positivist intellectual spirit of the times, the Zeitgeist, encouraged the convergence of these two lines of thought. Still lacking, however, was someone to bring them together, someone to "found" the new science. This final touch was provided by Wilhelm Wundt.

Nature of Psychology:

1. Psychology is scientific in nature: Science is a systematized body of knowledge gathered through carefully observing and measuring events (Morgan et al.,1986). Psychology possesses a well-organized theory that is supported by relevant psychological laws & principles and adopts the method of objective investigation, systematic and controlled observation, and scientific approach.

Goals of science which are shared by Psychology are Description, Explanation, Prediction, Dodson law and Control/Influence.

2**. Psychology is Natural or Positive Science, not a Normative Science:** In contrast to normative sciences, positive sciences study facts as they are and have little or no concern with what ought to be. Psychology in this sense easily falls in the category of positive sciences. In positive sciences, we merely describe behaviour as we discover or find it without evaluating it, without saying whether it is good or bad, desirable or undesirable, but in normative sciences, we seek to evaluate behaviour and thus attempt to influence or improve behaviour of others.

Psychology explains to us why and how we behave at different stages of growth. Like all other sciences it seeks to understand, predict and control the behaviour as such.

3. It has practical realm and experiential science and has a theoretical base.

4. It helps in predicting future developments.

5. It believes that every behavior has its roots, and factors causing, influencing or nurturing it.

6. Subjective ideas and opinions are not considered significant in the study of behavior in psychology.

Scope of Psychology:

During the current century psychology has made tremendous progress in its scope and field, psychology has circumscribed all aspects of human life.

Most psychologists can be classified in one of the three categories:

a) PRACTITIONERS: Psychologists who use their knowledge of psychology to aid individuals or groups by providing certain services, often in the form of therapy or counselling

b) ACADEMICIANS: They are employed in colleges and universities and are they typically engaged in teaching and research.

c) RESEARCHERS: They are employed in agencies, industries where examine diverse topics such of learning and memory as the e ffect of toxic environmental substances on process.

Psychology can be classified into two broad categories, namely, pure psychology and applied psychology. Pure psychology provides the framework and theory of the subject. It deals with the formulation of psychological principles and theories and it also suggests various methods and techniques for the analysis, assessment, modification and improvement of behaviour. In applied psychology, the theory generated or enunciate through pure psychology finds its practical expression.

Branches of Pure Psychology:

a) General Psychology: This is a relatively large field of psychology which deals with the fundamental rules, principles and theories of psychology in relation to the study of behaviour of normal adult human beings.

b) Abnormal Psychology: This is the branch of psychology which describes and explains the behaviour of abnormal people in relation to their environment. The causes, symptoms, signs, description and treatment of the abnormalities of the behaviour form the subject matter of this branch.

c) Social Psychology: This branch of psychology deals with group behaviour and interrelationships of people among themselves. Group dynamics, likes and dislikes, interests and attitude, social distance and prejudices of the people in their personal and social relationships are studied by this branch.

d) Experimental Psychology: This branch of psychology describes and explains the ways and means of carrying out psychological experiments along with scientific lines under controlled or laboratory situation for the study of mental processes and behaviour. It takes up animals, birds and human beings as the subjects of these experiments.

e) Developmental Psychology: This branch or field of psychology describes and explains the processes and products of growth and development in relation to the behaviour of an individual from birth to old age. For added convenience it is further sub-divided into branches such as child psychology, adolescent psychology and adult psychology.

f) Physiological Psychology: This branch of psychology describes and explains the biological and physiological basis of behaviour. The internal environment and physiological structure of the body, particularly the brain, nervous system and functioning of the glands in relation to the cognitive and affective behaviour of human beings comprise its subject-matter.

g) Geo Psychology: This new branch of psychology describes and explains the relation of physical environment particularly, weather, climate, soil and landscape with behaviour.

h) Para Psychology: This new branch of psychology deals with extra sensory perception, precognition, causes of claimed rebirth, telepathy and allied phenomena.

Branches of Applied Psychology:

a) Educational Psychology: This is the branch of applied psychology which seeks to apply the psychological principles, theories and techniques to human behaviour in educational situations. The subject -matter of this branch covers psychological ways and means of improving all aspects of the teaching learning process including the learner, the learning process, learning material, learning environment and the teacher.

b) Clinical Psychology: This branch of applied psychology describes and explains the causes of mental illness and abnormal behaviour of a patient attending a clinic or hospital and suggests individual or group therapy for treatment and effective adjustment of the affected person in society.

c) Industrial Psychology: This branch of applied psychology seeks application of the psychological principles, theories and techniques for the study of human behaviour in relation to the industrial environment. It studies the topics and the ways and means of ascertaining the tastes and interests of consumers, advertising and sale of products, selection, training and placement of personnel, solution of labour problems, establishment of harmonious relations between the employers and employees, strengthening the morale of the workers and increasing production etc.

d) Legal Psychology: It is the branch of applied psychology which studies the behaviour of clients, criminals, witnesses etc. in their respective surroundings with the application of psychological principles and techniques. It contains the subject-matter for improving the ways and means of detection of crimes, identification and apprehension of false witnesses and other complex issues. The root causes of any crime, offence or dispute or legal case can be properly understood through the use of this branch of psychology and subsequently proper corrective and rehabilitative measures can be decided upon.

e) Military Psychology: This branch of psychology is concerned with the use of psychological principles and techniques in the field of military activities. How to maintain the morale of the soldiers and citizens during war time, how to fight the enemies propaganda and intelligence activities, how to secure recruitment of better personnel for the armed forces, and how to improve the fighting capabilities and organisational climate and leadership in the armed forces are some of the various topics dealt with by this branch of psychology.

f) Political Psychology: This branch of psychology deals with the use of psychological principles and techniques in studying politics and deriving political gains. The knowledge of the dynamics of group behaviour, judgement of public opinion, qualities of leadership, psychology of propaganda and suggestion, the art of diplomacy etc. are some of the key concepts that find place in the subject-matter of political psychology.

Status of Psychology

Indeed, today's psychology is an enterprise with plurality and multivocality. Some scholars view it as an eclectic enterprise, struggling to establish a clear identity and a useful agenda for its work.

The realizations that humans are cultural beings and science is also a socially embedded activity have led to adoption of newer methods and conceptual models in psychology. Psychologists consider their own culture as correct or natural and differences from the same are treated as deficits. Thus, accounts of behavior based on predominantly individualistic positions often renders the behavior from the collectivist cultures as deficient. Similarly, a male-centered view or a ndrocentrism treats male characteristics as norms and women's behaviors or traits are considered negatively. This resulted in adopting diverse approaches.

A critical scrutiny of the developments in the discipline would reveal that the scope and methods of psychology have undergone major changes and shifts. The academic discipline of psychology has been addressing several grand issues—large scale questions or themes that crosscut the field. The three issues are: stability versus change, nature versus nurture, and rationality versus irrationality.

Several branches of psychology are applied—not only do they seek to acquire basic knowledge about human behavior also attempt to put it to practical use.

Hence, the status of psychology is an assimilation and integration of ideas and concepts of various schools and has taken knowledge from various other disciplines. It is an inter-disciplinary disciple with diverse approaches addressing a wide array of issues. Almost all disciplines of natural and social science streams, humanities, trade and commerce have started to borrow and adopt the principles of psychology to explain human behavior.